(c) if so, whether Government would open the Kolkata—Silchar route for private airliners like Air Deccan, Sahara and Jet Airways and if so, by when?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) No, Sir. The aircraft in the fleet of Indian Airlines/ Alliance Air are maintained in an airworthy condition and are safe to travel.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Airlines are free to operate anywhere in the country subject to compliance of route dispersal Guidelines.

Upgradation of Mangalore Airport into an International Airport

4179. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a proposal for upgradation of the Mangalore Airport into an International Airport;

(b) if so, the details in this regard with allocations of funds made for the purpose;

(c) whether required land has been acquired for the purpose; and

(d) if so, the details in this regard and the targeted date for completion of the project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Withdrawal of air services to Gulf countries from Thiruvananthapuram

4180. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any proposal to withdraw the existing Air India Services to Gulf countries from Thiruvananthapuram International Airport;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the details of proposed reduction of flights and the anticipated loss to be sustained following the decision of national carriers; and

(d) whether there is any proposal to increase the foreign airline services to Thiruvananthapuram in the wake of national carriers decision?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

(d) Thiruvananthapuram is already available as a point of call to several foreign airlines. Actual operations are, however matters of commercial judgement of the airlines and traffic demand.

Air connectivity to historical cities

*4181. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that several States in the country have requested for new airports keeping in view the growing number of tourists;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government propose to extend the domestic flights to small and big cities keeping in view the rising number of air passengers;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) whether Government are formulating any action plan to connect the ancient and historical cities in the country with air flights?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A number of cities ad towns have been proposed by some State Governments for construction of new airports such as Pakyong (Sikkim), Chiethu (Nagaland), Mopa (Goa), Chakan & Navi Mumbai (Maharashtra), Ludhiana (Punjab), Ajmer (Rajasthan), Gulbarga, Bellary & Bijapur (Karnataka), Kannur (Kerala) and Itanagar (Arunachal Pradesh).

(c) to (e) Government has laid down route dispersal guidelines with a view to achieve better regulation of air transport services taking into account the need for air transport services of different regions of the country including North-Eastern region. It is, however, upto the airlines to provide air services to specific places depending upon the traffic demand and commercial viability. As such, the airlines are free to operate anywhere in the country subject to compliance of route dispersal guidelines issued by the Government.

* Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.